

provides guidance in preparing the ER for proposed actions classified as categorical exclusions (CEs) (§1794.22(a)); RUS Bulletin 1794A-601 provides guidance in preparing the ER for proposed actions which require EAs (§1794.23(b) and (c)); and RUS Bulletin 1794A-603 provides guidance in conducting scoping for proposed actions classified as requiring an EA with scoping or an EIS. Copies of these bulletins are available upon request by contacting the Rural Utilities Service, Publications Office, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Stop 1522, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-1522.

(b) *Water and waste program.* RUS Bulletin 1794A-602 provides guidance in preparing the ER for proposed actions classified as CEs (§1794.22(b)) and EAs (§1794.23(b)). A copy of this bulletin is available upon request by contacting the appropriate State Director. State Directors may provide supplemental guidance to meet state and local laws and regulations and to provide for orderly application procedures and efficient service to applicants. State Directors shall obtain the Administrator's approval for all supplements to RUS Bulletin 1794A-602. Each State Office shall maintain an updated Natural Resource Management Guide and provide applicants with pertinent sections or a copy of the current edition thereof.

[63 FR 68655, Dec. 11, 1998, as amended at 68 FR 45158, Aug. 1, 2003]

§§ 1794.8-1794.9 [Reserved]

Subpart B—Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act

§ 1794.10 Applicant responsibilities.

As described in subpart C of this part, applicants shall prepare the applicable environmental documentation concurrent with a proposed action's engineering, planning, and design activities. RUS shall assist applicants by outlining the types of information required and shall provide guidance and oversight in the development of the documentation. Documentation shall not be considered complete until all public review periods, as applicable, have expired and RUS concurrence, as

set forth in the appropriate decision document and associated public notice, has been issued.

§ 1794.11 Apply NEPA early in the planning process.

The environmental review process requires early coordination with and involvement of RUS. Applicants should consult with RUS at the earliest stages of planning for any proposal that may require RUS action. For proposed actions that normally require an EIS, applicants shall consult with RUS prior to obtaining the services of an environmental consultant.

§ 1794.12 Consideration of alternatives.

In determining what are reasonable alternatives, RUS considers a number of factors. These factors may include, but are not limited to, the proposed action's size and scope, state of the technology, economic considerations, legal and socioeconomic concerns, availability of resources, and the timeframe in which the identified need must be fulfilled.

§ 1794.13 Public involvement.

(a) In carrying out its responsibilities under NEPA, RUS shall make diligent efforts to involve the public in the environmental review process through public notices and public hearings and meetings.

(1) All public notices required by this part shall describe the nature, location, and extent of the proposed action and indicate the availability and location of additional information. They shall be published in newspaper(s) of general circulation within the proposed action's area of environmental impact and the county(s) in which the proposed action will take place or such other places as RUS determines.

(2) The number of editions in which the notices should be published will be specified in the Bulletins referenced in §1794.7 or established on a project-by-project basis. Alternative forms of notice may also be necessary to ensure that residents located in the area affected by the proposed action are notified. The applicant should not publish notices for compliance with this part until so notified by RUS.